



CARLA LONZI 2023-03-04

LET'S SPIT ON HEGEL

PHILOFICTION ANARCHISM, FEMINISM, HEGEL

The feminine problem is the relationship of any woman – deprived as she is of power, of history, of culture, of a role of her own – to any man: his power, his history, his culture, his absolute role.

This problem calls into question the whole of man's work and thought; man who has had no awareness of woman as a human being on the same level as himself.

In the eighteenth century we demanded equality, and Olympe de Gouges went to the scaffold for her *Declaration of the Rights of Women*. The demand for equality of women with men in the

matter of rights coincides historically with the assertion of the equality of men among themselves. Our presence was timely then. Today we are conscious that we ourselves are posing a question.

The oppression of woman did not begin in historical times, but is buried in the obscurity of human origins. The oppression of woman will not be overcome by annihilating man. Nor will equality cancel it; oppression will continue with equality. Revolution will not cancel it; it will continue with revolution. The concept of alternatives is a stronghold of male power, where there is no place for women.

The equality available today is not philosophical but political. But do we, after thousands of years, really wish for inclusion, on these terms, in a world planned by others? Would we indeed be gratified by participating in the great defeat of man?

What is meant by woman's equality is usually her right to share in the exercise of power within society, once it is accepted that she is possessed of the same abilities as man. But in these years women's real experience has brought about a new awareness, setting into motion a process of global devaluation of the male world. We have come to see that at the level of power there is no need for abilities but only for a particularly effective form of alienation. Existing as a woman does not imply participation in male power, but calls into question the very concept of power. It is in order to avoid this attack that we are now granted inclusion in the form of equality.

Equality is a juridical principle. To the common denominator of all human beings justice should thus be rendered. Difference is an existential principle which concerns the modes of being human, the peculiarity of one's own experiences, goals, possibilities, and one's sense of existence in a given situation and in the situation one wants to create for oneself. The difference between woman and man is the basic difference of humankind.

A black man may be equal to a white man, a black woman to a white woman.

Woman's difference is her millennial absence from history. Let us profit from this difference; for once we have achieved inclusion in society, who is to say how many more centuries will have to pass before we can throw off this new yoke? The task of subverting the order of the patriarchal structure cannot be left to others. Equality is what is offered as legal rights to colonized people. And what is imposed on them as culture. It is the principle through which those with hegemonic power continue to control those without.

The world of equality is the world of legalized oppression and one-dimensionality. In the world of difference, terrorism discards its weapons and oppression yields to the variety and multiplicity of life. Equality between the sexes is merely the mask with which woman's inferiority is disguised.

This is the stand of those who, being different, want to effect a total change in the culture that has held them prisoners.

We have realized not only the fact of our oppression, but the alienation generated in the world by our imprisonment. There is not one single reason left for woman to accept man's objectives.

At this new stage of consciousness woman rejects the levels both of equality and of difference, as a dilemma imposed upon her by male power. She claims that no human being or group should either define themselves or be defined in terms of another human being or group.

Woman's oppression is the outcome of thousands of years; capitalism has rather inherited than produced it. The development of private property expressed an imbalance between the sexes in the need of each man to hold power over each woman, while the power relationships among men were being defined. To interpret our destiny up till now on a purely economic basis is to make recourse to a mechanism whose primary cause is still ignored. We know that the instincts of human beings are typically oriented according to the satisfaction they may or may not achieve in their relationship with the other sex. Historical materialism misses the emotional element which lay behind the transition to private property. It is there that we shall look in order to identify the archetype of property, the very first object conceived by man: the sexual object. By discarding his first prey from man's unconscious, woman can unblock the origins of pathological possessiveness.

Women realize the political connection between Marxist-Leninist ideology and their sufferings, needs, aspirations. But they do not believe that women are secondary, a consequence of the revolution. They question the idea that their cause should be subordinated to the class problem. They cannot accept that the struggle be set in terms which pass over their heads.

Subsuming the feminine problem to the classist conception of the master-slave struggle is an historical mistake. In fact, this conception comes out of a culture which dismissed the essential discrimination of humankind, i.e. man's absolute privilege over woman; it creates a new perspective only for men, as it poses the problem only in their terms.

Subordination to the classist perspective means for woman the acceptance of terms borrowed from a slavery quite different from her own; terms which actually witness to her misrepresentation. Woman is oppressed as a woman, at all social levels; not as a class, but as a sex. This gap in Marxist theory is no accident, nor would it be filled by stretching the concept of class to make room for women as a new class. Why has it been overlooked that women play a part in the productive process through their work in reproducing labour-power within the family? And that their exploitation in the home is an essential function of the accumulation of capital? By trusting all hopes of a revolutionary future to the working class, Marxism has ignored women, both as oppressed people and as bearers of the future. Its revolutionary theory was developed within the framework of a patriarchal culture.

Let us consider the man-woman relationship in Hegel, the philosopher who saw the slave as the driving moment of history. He rationalized patriarchal control most subtly of all within the dialectics of a divine feminine principle and a human masculine principle. The former presided in the family, the latter in the community. "While the community takes sustenance only by destroying the happiness of the family and by dissolving self-consciousness in universal self-consciousness, it produces, in that which oppresses and which is at the same time essential for it — in other words in femininity in general — its inner enemy." Woman never goes beyond the

stage of subjectivity. She recognizes herself in her relations by blood and by marriage, and thus remains immediately universal. She lacks the necessary premises for leaving the family ethos and for achieving the self-conscious force of universality through which man becomes a citizen. Her condition, which is the consequence of her oppression, is treated by Hegel as its cause. The difference between the sexes is used to form the natural metaphysical basis both for their opposition and for their reunification. Within the feminine principle Hegel locates an a priori passivity in which the proofs of male domination disappear. Patriarchal authority has kept women in subjection, and the only value recognized as belonging to them is their being able to accept it as their own nature.

In accordance with the whole tradition of western thought, Hegel sees woman as, by nature, confined in one particular stage, which is given as much resonance as possible, but at which no man would ever choose to be born.

But the feminine, as the “eternal irony of the community,” laughs at the aging thinker who is indifferent to any pleasure and only cares for the universal. It turns to the young and finds an accomplice to share this scorn. Beyond the divine law which woman is meant to incarnate, beyond her duty to household gods, beyond the fine gestures from Greek tragedy with which she ascends from the depths of hell to the light of existence, woman reveals an attitude which would have appeared rather a threat than an oddity, had it not been for her weakness: her reaction towards mature men and her preference for the young. But because Hegel identified with the values of patriarchal culture, he treated this attitude as something purely instrumental. Women's high valuation of youth, that is of “virility,” is explained by Hegel as the stimulus for the community to focus upon the element most relevant for its action outwards, for war. Actually, we can see through her gesture and detect the patriarch's power over women and the young. Its real intention goes against the family and against society, embodied in the representative of power who dominates them both. By means of their scorn, they isolate the historical figure of the oppressor from which they wish to be liberated. But it is the oppressor who, as the head of the family and of society, is able to run the game and to turn to his own advantage any move which women or the young may make. The young man, encouraged by her attention, will indeed prove a brave defender of the community.

Wherever woman reveals herself as the “eternal irony of the community,” we can at all times recognize the presence of feminism.

Two positions coexist in Hegel: one interprets woman's destiny in terms of the principle of femininity, while the other sees in the slave not an unchanging principle of essence, but rather a human condition, the historical realization of the gospel maxim that “the last shall be first.” Had Hegel recognized the human origin of woman's oppression, as he did in the case of the slave's, he would have had to apply the master-slave dialectic in her case as well. But in doing so he would have encountered a serious obstacle. For, while the revolutionary method can capture the movement of the social dynamics, it is clear that woman's liberation could never be included in the same historical schemes. On the level of the woman-man relationship, there is no solution which eliminates the other; thus the goal of seizing power is emptied of meaning. Emptying of

meaning the goal of seizing power is the distinctive feature of the struggle against the patriarchal system as a concurrent and successive stage to the master-slave dialectic.

The axiom according to which everything that is rational is real reflects the belief that the cunning of reason will always be in agreement with power. And the mechanism which ensures that this accommodation is in fact made is dialectic. This triadic structure of thought would lose its hold on the human mind in a way of life which was not dominated by patriarchy. *The Phenomenology of the Mind* is a phenomenology of the patriarchal mind, the embodiment in history of the monotheistic divinity. Woman appears there as an image whose level of significance is an hypothesis formulated by others.

We can find within ourselves two glaring refutations of Hegel's interpretation: the woman who rejects the family, and the young man who rejects war.

The young man perceives intuitively that the father's traditional right of life and death over his sons openly realizes a wish, rather than legalizes a practice. He then sees war as an unconscious expedient to murder him, a conspiracy against him.

One should not forget that "Family and safety" is a fascist slogan.

The anxiety which seizes a young man when he is about to take his place in adult society actually conceals his conflict with the patriarchal model. This conflict takes anarchistic forms in which a global rejection is expressed, without any compromise. Virility refuses to become paternalistic, it refuses the role of the blackmailer. But in the absence of his historical ally — woman — the young man's anarchistic experience is merely wishful thinking, and he yields to the call of organized mass struggle. Marxist-Leninist theory offers him a chance to turn his rebellion into something constructive by allying himself to the proletarian struggle (to the success of which the liberation of youth is also delegated). But by doing this the young fall again within the dialectic foreseen by patriarchal culture: a culture focused on the seizure of power. Believing that, in alliance with the proletariat, they have singled out in capitalism the common enemy, the young abandon their own ground, that of the struggle against the patriarchal system. They put all their faith in the proletariat as the bearer of the revolutionary moment. They may want to spur the workers if they seem too pacified by the successes of trade unions, or by the tactical considerations of party politics; but there is no doubt in their minds that the proletariat is the historical force of the future. By fighting someone else's battle, the young once again allow themselves to become subordinated, which is, of course, what has always been desired of them. Women, on the other hand, have the experience of two hundred years of feminism, and this gives them some advantage over the young. They tried first during the French and then during the Russian revolutions to combine their problematic with that of men at a political level, but they were simply granted the status of aggregate. Women now declare that the proletariat is revolutionary in its confrontation with capitalism, but reformist in facing the patriarchal system.

In his *Prison Notebooks*, Gramsci has a note in the section entitled "Intellectuals and the Organization of Culture," to the effect that the young of the ruling class (in the broadest sense) may rebel and go over to the progressive class once it becomes historically capable of seizing

power. But in this case, the young exchange the authority of the elder generation of one class for that of another. In either class the young are subordinated to their elders on a generational basis.

From Plato's Republic to More's *Utopia* to the utopian socialist theories of the eighteenth century, the ideal of a common ownership of goods had as a corollary the dissolution of the family as the nucleus of particular interests. This line of thought was continued by Marx and Engels. They, however, insisted not on the fact that the elimination of the economic element would put each woman at the disposal of each man and each man at the disposal of each woman, as Fourier wrote, but rather on the possibility of a relationship free from utilitarian considerations. The first formulation of this problem on the part of Engels appeared in *The Principles of Communism*, published in 1847:

Under the communist order of society the relationship between the two sexes will be a simple private one which will be the concern solely of those participating in it, and with which society cannot interfere. This will be made possible because of the elimination of private property and the communal education of children, and thereby the removal of the two foundations for marriage as we have known it up till now: the dependence of women on men and of children on their parents ensuing from the system of private ownership.

A year later Marx and Engels wrote in the *Communist Manifesto*:

Abolition of the family! Even the most radical flare up at this infamous proposal of the communists. On what foundation is the present family, the bourgeois family based? On capital, on private gain ... But you communists would introduce the community of women, screams the whole bourgeoisie in chorus. The bourgeois sees in the wife a mere instrument of production. He hears that the instruments of production are to be exploited in common, and, naturally, can come to no other conclusion than that the lot of being common to all will likewise fall to their women. He has not even a suspicion that the real point aimed at is to do away with the status of women as instruments of production.

Almost forty years later, in *The Origins of Private Property and the Family*, Engels explained the relationship between the economic structure and the family according to the principles of historical materialism, and made fully explicit his conviction that with the end of capitalism marriage would be realized in more human forms:

Once economic considerations have become secondary ... all experience suggests that woman's equality, thus achieved, will tend much more to make men monogamous than women polyandrous. What will disappear from marriage are those characteristics which were impressed in it at its origins by relations of property: firstly, male dominance, and secondly, indissolubility. What we can predict today about the form which sexual relations will take after capitalist production has been swept away, which will happen very soon, is primarily negative in character, and is limited to what will be suppressed.

In communist countries the institution of the family has remained untouched by the socialization of the means of production, which has on the contrary reinforced it, since it has reinforced the

prestige and the role of the patriarchal figure. The revolutionary struggle has actually brought to the fore personalities and values of a typically patriarchal and repressive kind; these in their turn have created a society organized at first as a paternalistic state, then as a truly authoritarian and bureaucratic state. The classist conception, with its exclusion of woman as an active force in the elaboration of the principles of socialism, has turned a revolutionary theory into a father-centered theory. Sexophobia, moralism, conformism have taken hold of the social roles, saving them from that dissolution which had for centuries been cherished as the natural consequence of the elimination of private property. The family is the founding stone of patriarchal order. It is rooted not only in economic interests, but in man's psychological make-up; in all times he has considered woman an object of domination, and a springing board to higher deeds. Marx himself lived as a traditional husband, devoted to his scholarly and ideological work, with a number of children, including the one born to his maid. The abolition of the family does not mean the communization of women, as Marx and Engels made clear, nor any formula which makes woman into an instrument of "progress." It means the liberation of one half of humankind, which would make its voice heard, challenging, for the first time in history, not only bourgeois society but every society in which man is the protagonist, thus going far beyond the struggle against that economic exploitation denounced by Marxism. The resumption of the struggle for women's liberation is not taking place today in the socialist countries, where the social structure has achieved an almost medieval rigidity, with the authoritarian imposition of patriarchal myths rehabilitated by the revolution; it happens in the bourgeois states of the capitalistic west, where the downfall of traditional values can only be accomplished with the intervention of women. This process involves the downfall of the patriarchal conception, and it signifies the destruction not only of bourgeois form, but of a type of male civilization as well. Marxist thought developed within the framework of the master-slave dialectic (itself a basic conflict in the culture of a nascent bourgeoisie), giving this dialectic a concrete form by articulating it in terms of social classes. Yet the dictatorship of the proletariat has shown very clearly that it is not necessarily accompanied by a transformation of social roles. It has maintained and consolidated the family, the central institution for reproducing that human structure incompatible with any real change in values. The communist revolution took place on male-dominated cultural and political foundations, with the repression of feminism and its instrumental use. It will now have to face the revolt against masculine values that women want to extend way beyond the class struggle of the patriarchal system.

Even at the culmination of the struggle for the dictatorship of the proletariat, feminism confronted the situation with insights and methods which represented a radical break. But it was precisely in those revolutionary circumstances that communist women were forcibly reminded by their male comrades of the "real" problems, and of the dangers of deviationism. The frustration which this caused often ended in self-sacrifice.

Lenin said to Clara Zetkin: "The list of your mistakes is not yet finished, Clara. I've heard that in your regular meetings for the discussion of literature and in your discussion with workers, you seem preoccupied with questions of sex and marriage and that this problem was the centre of your political education and your teaching activity. I couldn't believe my ears ... I was told that

sexual topics were also a favourite subject in your youth organization. They surely have plenty of material on this subject. It is particularly scandalous, particularly harmful for the youth movement, since such discussion can easily help to excite certain individuals and undermine their strength and their health. You must combat this tendency. The women's movement and the youth movement have many points of contact. Our communist women should carry out systematic work with the young. This should be to educate them, to carry them from the world of individual maternity to the world of social maternity ... The marriage form and relationships between the sexes satisfy no one. In this area a revolution is coming which corresponds to the proletarian revolution. It is understood that this whole intricate question is as important for women as for the young ... Many young people characterize their position as revolutionary or communist and they sincerely believe that this is so. But for us older people, there is really nothing to make us believe them. I am not altogether a melancholy old ascetic, but this new sexual life which the young lead – and often adults too – strikes me as completely bourgeois, like one of the many aspects of a bourgeois brothel . . . You must know the familiar theory according to which in a communist society the satisfaction of sexual instincts or amorous impulses would be as easy and insignificant as drinking a glass of water ... but would a normal man in his right mind throw himself to the ground and drink from a puddle of filthy rain water? Would he drink from a glass already touched by ten other lips? This “glass of water” theory has made our young people mad, quite literally mad.”

And in a letter to Ines Armand, dated January 1915, Lenin wrote: “Dear Friend, I warmly recommend that you write a more detailed version of the outline of your text ... But there is one observation that I must already make: I suggest that you suppress ‘the demand (by women) for freedom in love’ entirely. This is not a proletarian demand at all, but a bourgeois one.” Lenin contrasts “the baseness and vulgarity of the loveless marriage of peasants, intellectuals and petty bourgeois” with “the civil proletarian marriage based on love.” Following her exchange of letters with Lenin, Ines Armand withdrew her text for women workers from publication.

How does the “demand for freedom in love” differ from “civil proletarian marriage based on love”? The difference lies in the fact that the former was made by women and taken up by the young, as one aspect of a revolutionary way of life, while the other crystallized the repressive values laid down by the party ideologists for the edification of a new man. Free love was the feminist version of the criticism of the family. Proletarian marriage was a product of the masculine order of things, the masculine interpretation of the premises of communism as they had been explained by Engels. When a communist woman from Vienna published a short work on sexual problems, Lenin wrote of it, indignantly: “What a silly pamphlet! The few precise arguments in it have been known to women workers since the time of Bebel, and not in this arid and irritating form either. Its references to Freud's theories give it an air of being “scientific”, but in fact it is a superficial muddle. Actually, Freud's theory is itself only a passing fad.”

According to Lenin, woman could develop and achieve a true equality with man, once, in a communist society, she had freed herself from unproductive labour in the home to engage in productive labour outside.

No revolutionary ideology could persuade us any more that women and the young can or should find a solution to their problems in struggle, in sublimation or in sport. Grown men do not renounce the privilege of keeping them under control.

We see in the indifference that women have traditionally shown towards politics a spontaneous reaction to an ideological and political system in which their own problems are painfully allowed to rise to the surface only when men paternalistically appeal to women in order to manoeuvre them as a striking force.

The young are working for a social and political revolution which will exempt enthusiasm to solve the crisis of male society. Thus, women are allowed to fill man's roles, and this manoeuvre is made to appear a compensation for their age-old exclusion, and is passed off as a victory of the feminist movement.

Although the nature of maternity is distorted by the conflict between the sexes, by the impersonal myth of the preservation of the species and by woman's life of forced self-sacrifice, maternity has been for us an important source of thoughts and feelings, the circumstance of a special initiation. We are not responsible for giving birth to humanity in our slavery. It is not the son that made us into slaves, but the father.

Therefore, before dismissing the relationship between mother and son as a stumbling stone for humankind, we should remember that they are held in a single bond by the authority of the father. The alliance between woman and the young is formed against this authority.

Don't ask us what we think of marriage and of its historical corrective, divorce. Any institution designed to protect man's privilege reflects a view of the relationship between the sexes which is no longer tolerable. We will blow up all the instruments of torture used to oppress women.

The myth of maternal love will be dissolved the moment woman, at the fullest time of her life, experiences quite genuinely, in a natural exchange with the young, those feelings of joy, pleasure and playfulness which the taboos of the patriarchal system allow her to share only with her children.

The root of the Oedipus complex is not the incest taboo but the exploitation of this taboo by the father for his own protection.

A significant image of the past takes form before our eyes: on the one side, a staircase up which man proudly ascends; on the other, a staircase down which woman painfully descends.

Whatever little pride she is allowed in a stage of her life is not enough to sustain her to the end.

Once the cause of women is brought into the open, it is a won cause.

Culture, ideology, institutions, rituals, codes and mores are all surrounded by male superstitions about women. This background pollutes any private situation; from this background man keeps gathering his presumption and arrogance.

The young man is also oppressed by the patriarchal system, but he is, too, a candidate for the

role of the oppressor in the future. Any upsurge on the part of the young is inherently ambiguous.

The way in which the rebellion of youth is manipulated is another example of the distorting influence of the patriarchal system. By treating the hippy movement as a religious movement, politically committed students are using a politically discredited label to continue a paternalistic pattern. Secure in their ideological certainties, they claim that it is only a significant episode, but a non-dialectical moment of society. Precisely in that we recognize its peculiar value. The hippy movement represents a flight in disgust from the patriarchal system, the rejection of the politics of power and of all political patterns of predominantly male groups. Hippies no longer split the public and the private, and their lives are a mixture of the masculine and the feminine. The girl who out of frustration withdraws from the political student groups, or who in her frustration adjusts to the revolutionary behaviour of her comrades, that girl is facing a dilemma whose premises were laid down by collectives of men. They are now exploring as a specific area what in all times has been their field of action; a global view of problems is a pretence as long as men monopolize not only bourgeois but also revolutionary and socialist culture. It was the hippies, girls and boys, who first began to mock this hierarchy. On the discarded remains of aggressive and violent behaviours in which they saw the history of the belligerency of the fathers, they have tried to set up a community not based on masculine values. Ideology had always rationally explained and justified those behaviours and values as the means of changing the world. Woman's forced absence from the whole range of life in the community had magnified man's aberrant behaviour in his struggle to develop ways of living and patterns of thought. Woman's new presence has encouraged a voluntary dropping out on the part of the young; using whatever means are available, destructive, though non-violent, they express their conviction that it is necessary to start all over again from the beginning. The fact that the hippies, as many hope, will be fully reabsorbed by the establishment can in no way diminish the productive disorder which their sudden and unexpected appearance on the scene has caused.

The whole structure of society pushes its prey, like the beaters at a shoot, towards the point at which the prey will be trapped. Marriage is the point at which captivity is made final. While governments grant divorce laws, and the Catholic church fights to prevent them, woman demonstrates her maturity by denouncing every aspect of the absurd regulation of relationship between the sexes. The extent of the male crisis can be seen in the dependence on formulae: they are the magic guarantee of his superiority.

Women have always been subjected to economic dependence, first on their fathers, then on their husbands. Their liberation, however, does not lie in achieving economic independence, but in destroying the institution which made them into slaves even after slavery had been eliminated.

Every thinker who has taken a global view of the human condition has underlined, from his own particular point of view, the basic inferiority of women. Freud himself found a theoretical basis for the curse of women: their alleged want of a penis, identified as a means to completeness. We express our incredulity at a psychoanalytical dogma which suggests that woman, at a tender age, feels herself handicapped by a metaphysical anguish at her difference.

In every family the boy's penis is treated as a sort of son to the son. It is talked about quite openly in complimentary terms. A little girl's genitals, on the other hand, are totally ignored. They are not given a name, they are not fondled like the boy's; they have no character, no literature. An advantage is taken of her body's secrecy to pass over its existence in silence. The relationship between male and female is not a relationship between two sexes but between one sex and its absence.

Freud wrote these lines in a letter to Martha Bernays, his fiancée: "Precious darling, while you are taking such pleasure in activities and management of the household, I am at the moment tempted by the desire to solve the riddle of the structure of the brain."

Let us look into the private lives of great men: even the most common gestures partake of an aberration born of the daily closeness to a human being coldly defined as inferior.

There are no individuals, no geniuses, who have ever developed a correct view on all problems: no one has escaped the failures of human nature.

We live here and now, and the here and now are exceptional; as for the future, we had rather it were unexpected than exceptional.

Our greatest concern is that women retain that outburst of emotional

confidence which is part of the most vital period of youth and which enables people to shape and touch the sources of creativity which will give a distinctive stamp to their lives. A girl is easily deceived into thinking that a psychic experience of which she was deprived in her youth may be recovered later. The emancipated woman is a useless model because she represents the adjustment of a personality, which failed to experience its leaps forward at the right moment.

Looking back we recognize ourselves in isolated peaks of creativity, but mostly we recognize ourselves in all the intelligence wasted in subjugation and in the endless round of daily chores through the times. We have been sacrificed and on this sacrifice idealist myths of femininity have proliferated.

We do not want to see women divided into good and bad, better and worse; for what interests us is the deepest core each of us shares with all the others, the point which is both so painful and precious.

The women's movement is not international but planetary.

The split between structure and superstructure forms the foundation for a law according to which human change always means primarily structural change. Changes in the superstructure would always reflect changes in the structure. But this is the patriarchal viewpoint and as far as we are concerned the theory of reflection has been discredited. Our chosen mode of action is deculturalization. It is not a cultural revolution which follows and integrates a structural revolution, nor one based on the validation at all levels of an ideology; it affirms the lack of any need for ideology at all. Women have countered the constructions of men simply with their own existential dimension: they have not had leaders, thinkers or scientists, but they have had energy, insight,

courage, dedication, application, sense and madness. All traces of these things have been erased because they were never meant to last; but our strength lies in not having a mythic view of facts. To act is not the specialized task of some particular caste, although it becomes so when the purpose of action is the achievement and the consolidation of power. Men have mastered this mechanism to perfection; and since it is a mechanism which is justified culturally, to reject male culture is to reject the achievements of power as a basis for the assessment of actions.

With maternity a woman achieves a moment of deculturalization: she runs through the early stages of life again in an emotional symbiosis with the child. The outside world seems to her like an alien product quite foreign to the primary needs of the life she is reliving.

Maternity is her "trip." Her consciousness turns spontaneously backwards to the origins of life, and she questions herself.

Male thought has sanctioned a mechanism which makes war, leadership, heroism and struggle between the generations all appear quite inevitable. Male subconsciousness marks a depository of violence and fear. The world is filled with his dreams of death, for which women are required to show pity; but we will no longer continue to act out this role imposed on us, and we will abandon men to the depths of their solitude.

War preserves the moral health of a people, in their indifference to what they are accustomed to, to what is fixed. Just as the wind preserves the waters of a lake from the stagnation which would result from a long calm, so a prolonged, or worse, a perpetual peace will infect a people. For whatever is negative-or-negating in men's nature must be preserved and never allowed to become fixed-and-stable.

The most recent sociological and psychological studies on the origins and motives of the institution of war accept the submission of women to men as a law of nature. They analyse the behaviour of individuals and groups — primitive and modern — from within a completely patriarchal framework and fail totally to realize that in the domination of women by men they are presented with a ready-formed pathological syndrome. The father and the mother are talked about as subjects and objects of projective processes which deform what could otherwise be a normal elaboration of the given elements in reality. But the father and the mother are not two primary entities but rather the result of a prevarication between the sexes which is given formal expression in the family. Unless we start from this premise we will delude ourselves into trying to remove the psychological causes of war (the atomic threat) by advocating a return to private values and therefore a denial of the sovereignty of the state, or by promoting institutions which would prohibit war as an individual crime. Such solutions ignore the fact that private values are the values of the family, and that the family itself marks the unconditional surrender of women to male power. It is in the family that men's pathological anxiety and defenses originate and it is from the family that he transfers them to the community, as its representative. Such solutions ignore, in short, the fact that this diseased condition of humankind cannot be diagnosed or cured by its own authoritarian means.

According to Hegel, work and struggle are the two activities which define humanity, identified as

men's history. The study of primitive peoples, however, can provide evidence that work is a female activity, whereas men's specific task is fighting wars. The moment a man is unable to fight, the moment he is taken prisoner and forced to work, he feels that he has lost his manhood and becomes a woman. Men used war as an external test to overcome their inner anxieties about their own virility. In its very origins, therefore, war was closely connected with men's ability to think of themselves as sexual beings. Yet what is at the roots of men's anxiety? The question is crucial because their anxiety is a constant theme of human history, reducing every conflict to the point at which it becomes insoluble and inevitably issues in the either-or of violence. The male species expresses itself in killing while the female species expresses itself in working and in protecting life. Psychoanalysis has suggested many reasons why man should treat war as a manly duty, but it says absolutely nothing about the connection between this attitude and the oppression of women. Moreover, the reasons which have led men to institutionalize war as a safety valve for their inner conflicts would make us believe that such conflicts are intrinsic to man's destiny, a given of the human condition. But woman's experience of the human condition is not marked by the same needs. She mourns when her sons are sent to the slaughter and her attitude of concern, although passive, distinguishes her role from that of men. In the destruction of the patriarchal system (through women's dismantling of the institution of the family) we can see, in outline, a far more realistic solution to the problem of war than any of those offered by the usual studies on this topic. This way we could achieve that transformation of humankind from the base which everyone invokes without having the least idea of how it could be brought about.

We will no longer allow anyone to treat us as the bearers of the species. Our children belong to nobody; neither to their fathers nor to the state. We will give them to themselves, just as we reclaim ourselves to ourselves.

The *raison d'état* and moralism are weapons to subjugate women; sexuophobic attitudes hide the hostility and the contempt against her.

The exclusion of women is the main single assurance which priests of God possess that they belong to an army of the Father. The Catholic celibate is the most dramatic expression of man's contempt for women becoming institutionalized. Over the centuries she has been made the object of an almost inexplicable rage, sanctioned in councils, disputes, laws and violence.

The religious and the aesthetic sensibilities have been identified by the dominant culture as two attitudes potentially antithetical to power. Accordingly, culture has absorbed them into two major frameworks of power: the religious and the artistic institutions. We can see that the religious life is a way of living out patriarchal codes in a metaphysical region which contests and rejects worldly success; and that artistic work involves the confutation of authoritarian values through the capricious workings of one's rebellious will. While religious people and artists give cardinal importance to their own freedom of action, society applies even to them the standards of success by making use of their prestige.

The allies we choose are not those who espouse our cause but those who have avoided the worst excesses in our repression. Our character affinity to artists arises from the direct link which

exists for us between what we do and its meaning, free of the anxiety which all the others feel about guarantees of cultural worth. Let us cite another letter from Freud, in reply to Karl Abraham, who had sent him an expressionist drawing (December 1922):

Dear friend, I have received the drawing which is supposed to represent your head. It is horrible. I know what an excellent person you are and I am all the more shocked that such a trifling flaw in your character as your tolerance for modern "art" has to be so cruelly punished ... People like these artists should be the last to have access to analytic circles for they are the all-too-undesirable illustration of Adler's theory that it is just the people with serious congenital defects of vision who become painters and draughtsmen. Allow me to forget this portrait while wishing you and your family everything good and pleasant for 1923.

Woman is not dialectically related to the male world. The demands she expresses do not constitute an antithesis, but a shift to another level altogether. This is the point on which we are most likely to be misunderstood and the one on which it is essential for us to insist.

The feminist movement is full of political intruders and sympathizers. We warn male observers against making objects of study out of us. It is no concern of ours whether they agree or not. We suggest that it would be wiser and more dignified for them not to interfere.

There is no need for us to accept the demagogic suggestions offered as encouragement against representatives of their own sex. Each of us has felt enough indignation of her own, and has enough understanding and determination to find more imaginative solutions for herself.

We must insist on our being in full possession of ourselves since every time a gap opens there is always somebody ready to occupy the space and appropriate us to himself.

For a girl, the university is not the place where she will achieve her liberation by means of culture, but the place where, after having been carefully prepared by the family, her repression will be completed. Her education is a process of slow poisoning which paralyses her just as she is about to embark on more responsible gestures and enjoy experiences that will enlarge her conception of herself.

Our specific task is to search out in any event, past and present, its connection with the oppression of women. Every aspect of a culture which goes on ignoring this oppression will be denigrated by us. It seems that, despite the atrocities of Nazism and Stalinism, and despite the present barbarities of imperialism, men still think, nevertheless, that they can redeem themselves from these terrible events. They deserve consideration, even taking account of the effort that has been made to circumscribe these phenomena. Man's real tragedy consists in the following: he is accustomed to finding the causes of his anxiety in the outside world, in the form of a hostile structure against which he must struggle, whereas now the notion that the problem of humanity is inside him, in the rigidity of a psychological structure which can no longer hold its destructive impulses, has reached the threshold of consciousness. In this way a sense of irreversible crisis is established, the only solution to which is the traditional red flag. Any self-criticism which is based in the old culture will reproduce the old conceitedness and irresponsibility. Men must break with

this tradition and disrupt their historical role as protagonists. This is the change we desire.

From the beginning of the feminist movement to today we have been witnessing the exploits of the last of the patriarchs, and we do not intend to witness any more. We are living and acting in a new situation: the beginning of a new upsurge of the themes, the hopes, the struggles of the female part of humankind, for so long kept aside.

Woman is a complete individual. What must be changed is not the way she is, but the way she sees herself. We must transform the view which others, as well as ourselves, have of our place in the world.

We will perform all the subjective gestures which will enable us to conquer a space around us. And by this we do not mean identification. Identification has a compulsive male quality. It strips the bloom from an existence and subjects it to the demand of a rationality which would control, day by day, the sense of success or failure.

Man is totally preoccupied with himself, with his own past, his own aims and his own culture. Reality strikes him as exhausted; his space flights prove it. Woman, on the other hand, insists that life must yet begin for her on our own planet. She can still see things where man no longer sees anything.

The male mind entered a final crisis the moment a mechanism was set into motion which has jeopardized the very survival of humankind. Woman comes of age by recognizing the motor force of this insane danger in the patriarch's character structure and in his culture.

Men have been staking life for thousands of years and today they are gambling with survival. Women are still slaves because they have rejected the stakes; for this they have been made inferior, incapable, impotent. Women claim survival as a value.

Men have been looking for a meaning of life beyond and even against life itself. For women, on the other hand, their lives and their sense of life's meaning overlap. We have had to wait thousands of years for men's anxieties about our attitude towards them to stop being turned into the mark of our inferiority. Woman is an immanence and man a transcendence: in this contrast philosophy has idealized a hierarchy of destinies. To the extent that man is a transcendence, it was impossible to doubt the quality of his actions; and to the extent that woman is an immanence, then man was right to ignore her so as to be able to carry out his historical tasks. Men accordingly have abused women, but on the basis of an inevitable opposition. Woman must simply assume her own transcendence. Philosophers have said too much; on what grounds do they acknowledge man's gesture of transcendence and deny woman's? They recognize transcendence by the efficacy of actions, and while they assume it to be originary they deny transcendence where actions do not lead to an increase in power. But to measure transcendence by the efficacy of action is typical of a patriarchal outlook. Men imagine that the only alternatives are those they can women must be an immanence, something inactive, rather than a different kind of transcendence which would have revealed itself had it not been suppressed by men. Women today want to assess the culture and history which take masculine

transcendence for granted, and to judge that transcendence itself. As the result of countless traumas — both conscious and unconscious — even men have had slowly to realize the crisis of their role as protagonists. But man's self-criticism still holds to the assumption that what is real is rational, and he continues to propose his traditional roles, justifying this as necessary to overcome himself. Women are disgusted with the ways in which men have overcome themselves by oppressing women and at the same time blaming their immanence on them. Self-criticism must give way to imagination.

Our message to man, to the genius, to the rational visionary is this: the future of the world does not lie in moving continually forwards along a path mapped out by man's desire for overcoming difficulties. The future of the world is open: it lies in starting along the path from the beginning again with woman as a subject.

We recognize within ourselves the capacity for effecting a complete transformation of life. Not being trapped within the master-slave dialectic, we become conscious of ourselves; we are the Unexpected Subject.

We reject as absurd the myth of the new man. The concept of power is the thread which runs throughout man's thinking, and which is the major consideration in his final choices. The subordination of women follows it around like a shadow. Any vision of the future based on these premises is accordingly false.

The feminist movement is itself the means and the end of any basic transformation of humankind. It needs no future, it makes no distinctions — bourgeoisie, proletariat, race, age, culture, clan or tribe. It comes neither from above nor from below, from the elite or from the base, it needs neither leadership nor organization, neither diffusion nor propaganda. An entirely new word is being put forward by an entirely new subject. It only has to be uttered to be heard. Acting becomes simple and elementary.

There are no goals, there is the present of our here and now. We are the world's dark past, we are giving shape to the present.

Summer 1970

Translated by Veronica Newman

(From Blackout (poetry & politics))

For an excellent essay on Carla Lonzi, see the following: Claire Fontaine, "We Are All Clitoridian Women: Notes on Carla Lonzi's Legacy", *e-flux Journal*, Issue #47, September 2013

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